



## A Critical Dialectics on Sustainable Economic Development in Mitigating Nigeria's Security Challenges

### Abstract

Nigeria's security challenges are dialectically rooted in a cycle of underdevelopment, where poverty, inequality, poor governance, and ineffective leadership fuel violence. This hinders sustainable economic development while destroying infrastructure, and discouraging investment. The country's high rate of security attacks has reached a point where lives and properties are no longer safe. This paper examined how security challenges have impacted sustainable economic development in Nigeria, with kidnapping and destruction of lives and property becoming common, undermining efforts to achieve economic progress. This paper aimed to reflect on some of the key factors of security challenges in Nigeria to ascertain the major implications on sustainable economic development in mitigating Nigeria's security challenges. The paper aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda of 2030 aiming to "promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development providing access to justice for all and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Goal 16). It suggested moving beyond military force to holistic reforms that rebuild trust, create jobs, and diversify the economy. This paper is guided by the Social Contract Theory just as the methodology is critical dialectics with findings that revealed that factors like political instability, poverty, corruption, unemployment, ethnic and religious divisions contributed to security challenges. The paper recommended, among other things, that states provide efficient security to respond to crimes and address grievances while uniting groups. This can foster mitigation if not complete eradication of the security challenges in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Critical Dialectics, Sustainable Economic Development, Mitigation, Security Challenges and Unemployment

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**Date Received:** 10th March, 2026

**Date Accepted:** 16th March, 2026

### Introduction

Nigeria faces complex security challenges, ranging from Boko Haram insurgency to banditry and kidnappings,

which threaten its economic development and human well-being (IEP, 2022). Paradoxically, economic development strategies often exacerbate

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these challenges, perpetuating inequality and environmental degradation (Oxfam, 2020). This paper presents a critical analysis of sustainable economic development in mitigating Nigeria's security challenges, exploring how a transformative development approach can address these issues. It argues that sustainable economic development is key to addressing Nigeria's security challenges, requiring a shift from traditional growth-centric models to people-centered, inclusive, and environmentally conscious paradigms. This study aims to examine some of the key factors contributing to security challenges in Nigeria and ascertain their major implications for sustainable economic development in mitigating these challenges. The study aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful societies and effective institutions.

The Nigerian government has implemented several policies and efforts to address the rising security challenges, including changing security chiefs and equipping them with more sophisticated arms and security weapons. Despite these efforts, security challenges persist in Nigeria. Consequently, multiple ways and techniques have been studied in research literature by various authors to address these security challenges through the lens of Social Contract Theory.

### **The Concept of Critical Dialectics**

Critical Dialectics is a research methodology that analyzes contradictions and conflicts within a system to understand power dynamics

and identify transformative possibilities. It involves:

- (i) Identifying conflicting elements (Contradiction)
- (ii) Understanding how contradictions lead to change (Change)
- (iii) Examining the system as a whole (Totality)
- (iv) Linking analysis to practical action (Praxis)

According to Hegel (in Miller, 2024), Critical Dialectics is a philosophical approach that examines the development of ideas, history, and reality through the interplay of opposing forces or contradictions. Here's a breakdown:

- (a) Thesis: An initial idea or state of reasoning where a formal statement of a point is developed.
- (b) Antithesis: An opposing idea or force, a proposition that's the diametric opposite of another proposition, referring to the second stage of a dialectical process where the thesis is negated.
- (c) Synthesis: The resulting higher level of understanding or reality, achieved by resolving the contradiction, combining thesis and antithesis to arrive at new ideals or knowledge (Gregson, 2024).

Hegel saw this dialectical process as a way to understand the evolution of consciousness, history, and the Absolute Spirit, believing contradictions are necessary for development and truth emerges from synthesizing opposing ideas. In social sciences, Hegel's dialectics has influenced critical theory, analyzing power dynamics, contradictions, and social change. In the

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Nigerian context, critical dialectics reveals how unemployment, poverty, and corruption contribute to security challenges, hindering sustainable economic development (Miller, 2024).

### **The Concept of Sustainable Economic Development**

The United Nations (2015) defined Sustainable Economic Development (SED) as “meeting current economic needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs. It's about balancing economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection to create a better life for all, now and later”. This is also conventionally defined as “the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period, subject to the stipulations that the number below the absolute poverty line does not increase and that the distribution of income does not become more unequal” (Jegade, 2019).

The primary concern of sustainable economic development is ensuring that the poor have access to sustainable and secure livelihoods. At the national level, this calls for policies, regulations, and incentives to induce economic behavior that is ‘environmentally rational’. Sustainable economic development additionally argues that ‘real’ improvements cannot occur unless the strategies being formulated and implemented are ecologically sustainable over the long term, consistent with social values and institutions, and encourage ‘grassroots’ participation in the development process.

As the primary objective is to provide lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption, and social instability (Ngwoke, 2020), sustainable economic development is directly concerned with increasing the material standard of living of the poor at the ‘grassroots’ level. This can be quantitatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, education services, health-care, sanitation, and water supply, emergency stocks of food and cash, to mention but a few, and only indirectly concerned with economic development at the aggregate, commonly national, level.

In general terms, the primary objective is reducing the absolute poverty of the world's poor through providing lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural disruption, and social instability (Ikenga *et al.*, 2022). The concept of sustainable economic development presents the evolution of the concept of sustainable development and reveals the factors that affect the sustainable development of economic entities. The author further emphasizes that sustainable development can be considered in relation to the economy of the country as a whole (Adebakin, 2012). From the above view, one can see sustainable economic development as a means of mitigating Nigeria's security challenges, especially when the entire regions of the nation are adequately developing.

### **Security Challenges in Nigeria**

Security challenges in Nigeria comprise a complex, multifaceted crisis

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threatening national stability, characterized by terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and ethno-religious conflicts. Driven by systemic corruption, extreme poverty, high youth unemployment, and porous borders, these threats hinder economic development and strain the capacity of security agencies (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). Nigeria, once Africa's largest economy, continues its downward trend due to Boko Haram activities, banditry, kidnapping, Fulani-Herders-Farmers clashes, and other security issues. The crime rate in Nigeria is extremely high. Institutions remain weak, with insufficiently protected property rights, high corruption, and undue influence.

The security situation remains serious in Nigeria. The country must continue to upgrade its infrastructure and improve its health and primary education (Iyekekpolo, 2020). Furthermore, Nigeria is not harnessing the latest technologies for productivity enhancements, as demonstrated by its low rates of ICT penetration. On the upside, Nigeria benefits from its relatively large market size, which bears the potential for significant economies of scale; a relatively efficient labor market, driven by its flexibility; and a solid financial market following its gradual recovery.

However, Nigeria has recently witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity, including Boko Haram activities, banditry, kidnapping, and Fulani-Herders-Farmers clashes, resulting in Ondo State's issuance of a Quit notice to Fulanis in the state. This has made national security a major issue for the government and prompted a

huge allocation of the national budget to security. To address the incidence of crime, the federal government has embarked on the criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, enhanced surveillance and investigation of criminal-related offenses, heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities, and the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media (Austin-Egole, 2022).

Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country remains high. Nigeria has consistently ranked low in the Global Peace Index (Obi, 2015), signifying a worsened state of security in the country. With the lingering security challenges and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security, the question that concerns everyone in Nigeria today is: "Can there be security?" Is the security of lives and properties achievable? Some have opined that the government at all levels has not done enough by not confronting the situation head-on and dealing with it decisively; others argue that the situation has a political undertone or inclination, calculated to serve the interest of certain political gods who have been dissatisfied and disgruntled about the political manifestations in the country (Nwosu *et al.*, 2019).

According to Chris (2012), GMD of Protection Plus Services Limited, security can be described as stability and continuity of livelihood, predictability of daily life, protection

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from crime, and freedom from psychological harm. Security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the ability to rise to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency and expertise. According to Onime (2018), a security challenge is defined as “the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to a lack of or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity, which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity, such as economic security and social security.

The renowned security expert said that for the government to tackle insecurity, a key starting point should be to understand the causes of insecurity as well as to investigate the sources of social disorder and instability. Zubairu (2020) pointed out that it is necessary to distinguish between different causes, as each may require a different remedy. Besides, it is essential to provide a holistic view of the suggestions or recommendations for solutions. More often, however, policymakers are disinclined to isolate and clarify particular causes. They prefer blanket references, considering that the causes of insecurity are interwoven and contributory to one another. Like in many other societies, the sources of insecurity in Nigeria have been traced to a number of factors and explained by different people. These factors have been classified or grouped into external and internal factors.

Beyond the external-internal dichotomy, sources of insecurity have also been classified as either remote or proximate

and immediate sources/causal factors. In Nigeria, the challenge is not so much about the insecurity of external sources, but rather that of internal sources. It is recognized that some internal factors have been enhanced and strengthened by the presence of external forces, but there is no doubt that if the internal situations did not present themselves, the external forces would be unable to infiltrate. Iwuoha (2014) further expatiated on the remote (root) factors of security challenges in Nigeria. Lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure is described as the corrosion or breakdown of institutional infrastructures. The foundations of the institutional framework in Nigeria are very shaky and have provoked deterioration of state governance and democratic accountability, thus paralyzing the existing set of constraints, including the formal and legitimate rules nested in the hierarchy of social order.

The state of security challenges in Nigeria is greatly a function of government failure or can be linked to government failure. This is manifested by the incapacity of the government to deliver public services and to provide basic needs for the masses (Ogunode, 2021). The lack of basic necessities by the people in Nigeria has created a pool of frustrated people who are easily ignited by any event to be violent. The argument here is that Nigeria has the resources to provide for the needs of its people, but corruption in public offices at all levels has made it impossible for officeholders to focus on the provision of basic needs for the people. Nigerian situation can be described as a ‘Paradox of Plenty’, a situation where the country

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earns a great deal of revenue through oil sales but fails to use these earnings to meet the needs of its people and to develop infrastructure as well as the economy. When these situations exist, the crime rate is bound to rise, and the security of lives and properties cannot be guaranteed (Yusuf *et al.*, 2022).

### Theoretical Framework

The Social Contract Theory was postulated by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes in 1651 in his book titled "Leviathan". It serves as a foundational work of political philosophy that discusses how people live together in society and the role of government. In it, Hobbes argues that humans are naturally self-interested and that, without a strong central authority, life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short". He says people would be in a constant state of conflict, so they create a social contract, giving up some freedoms to a powerful leader (the "Leviathan") in exchange for protection and order (Thomas, 2022).

The second scholar is John Locke, who published his *Two Treatises of Government* in 1689. It's a foundational text of liberalism and discusses: the idea of absolute monarchy as the first treatise critiques, arguing against the divine right of kings. The second treatise lays out Locke's ideas on social contract, natural rights (life, liberty, and property), and the role of government. Basically, Locke argues people have inherent rights and governments derive power from the consent of the governed (John, 2025). The third scholar is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who published "The Social Contract" in 1762 as a foundational philosophy work. He

argued people come together to form a society and agree on rules (the social contract) to protect each other and the community. He believed people are born free, but in society, they give up some freedoms for protection. The idea is governments should serve the "general will" of the people, not just the powerful (Christopher, 2023).

In view of the above, each scholar had different views on the social contract, but they agreed that individuals consent to governance in exchange for protection and security, emphasizing the need for governments to fulfill their obligations to citizens, promoting trust and security. This theory is suitable for this study because it offers insights into the complex relationships between economic development, security, and governance in Nigeria, emphasizing the need for governance and institutions that promote security and stability in our society. In essence, this theory offers insights into addressing Nigeria's security challenges through economic development and governance.

### Drivers of Security Challenges in Nigeria

Security challenges in Nigeria are driven by a complex mix of factors such as:

**Poverty and Unemployment:** Widespread poverty and unemployment create an environment where people are more likely to engage in criminal activities or join extremist groups. As a result of the high level of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians, especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime. Failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty,

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unemployment, and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of Nigeria's security challenges. To overcome this issue, sustainable economic development is one of the key drivers (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025b) and (Nwogwugwu *et al.*, 2012).

**Defective Governance and Deficient Leadership:** Poor governance and leadership have contributed to Nigeria's security challenges, with many leaders accused of prioritizing personal interests over national security. Corruption is a major obstacle to effective governance and security in Nigeria, with many officials accused of embezzling funds meant for security and development (Ngwoke, 2021). Nigeria faces profound leadership, significantly influencing its sustainable economic development, security challenges, and social discontent. The implications of such leadership failures are deeply entrenched in governance issues, corruption, inadequate representation, and poor policy implementation (Ulu *et al.*, 2022).

Nigeria is in dire need of effective leadership. This has become pertinent, especially in contemporary times, where security challenges are ravaging the economy. No nation can improve the quality of its leaders. The development of a society may be a function of leadership strength and the governance of government machinery (Umemezia, 2023:107) notes that:

Leadership is a critical part of Nigeria's problem of governance because the educational qualification prescribed for political

leaders by Section 131(d), as amended by the National Assembly in 2010, and Section 318(1) of the Constitution does not equip them to combine ideas and power, intellectualism and politics... A semi-literate president or governor is what the prescription amounts to.

The kind of leadership needed in Nigeria is visionary leadership, a leadership that is detribalized, such that it has at the leadership position only people who can inculcate in their followers the ideals of common citizenship as a transcendent factor among all Nigerians.

We cannot discuss good leadership and governance when we are still struggling to conduct free and fair elections in a democratic government. Identified free, fair, and credible election environments are the first step towards good governance. Furthermore, when there is no free and fair election, there can be no political, social, or economic stability (Oko *et al.*, 2024). This strongly applies to Nigeria, a situation whereby the country, supposed to allow a multiparty system to thrive, becomes dominated by two major political parties, which is alarming. The APC and PDP dominate the political arena, and rigging has become the most important instrument determining election success. In addition, many politicians now defect between parties, from either APC to PDP or vice versa, turning themselves into political sycophants and flatterers of the ruling party. They tend to approach the election process with a mindset of a "do or die" affair, and this has often made them very militant. Many go about with thugs, who often

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end up stealing ballot boxes to rig the election.

**Ethnic and Religious Tensions:**

Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious landscape can be a source of security challenges, particularly between Fulani herdsmen and farmers in the Middle Belt. At the most proximate and least disputable level, terrorism is the most fundamental source of security attack in Nigeria today, and its primary bases and sources of support have generally been located in religious fanaticism and intolerance (Ngwoke, 2020). Terrorism is "the premeditated use or threat of use of violence by an individual or group to cause fear, destruction, or death, especially against unarmed targets, property, or infrastructure in a state, intended to compel those in authority to respond to the demands and expectations of the individual or group behind such violent acts", which has cost 13.4 percent of the world's gross domestic product. Nigeria has lost large numbers of lives in the Northern region in recent times to the insurgency of this infamous sect, Boko Haram, which has been ravaging the northern region of the country (Alegbeleye, 2014).

The insecure environment of the economy refers to insecurity variables that affect the performance of sustainable economic development but over which the economic enterprise has little or no direct control. In Nigeria, the variables range from theft to organized armed robbery, kidnapping and demand for ransom, assassination, repeated invasion and blockading of business installations, social injustice, unemployment, lack of access to livelihood resources, the rising cost of

living, and bombing, pipeline destruction. All these variables of crimes and social maladies have made the Nigerian security environment complex (Ngwoke, 2020). In addition to the usual crimes, the coordinated attacks from the Boko Haram sect in the northern part of the country, besides making life miserable for Nigerians, have affected many businesses operating in that region. The bomb explosions initiated by this group have been on the increase, leading to enormous loss of life and property and a general atmosphere of fear and social tension in the country (Ogunode, 2021).

**Porous Borders**

One major immediate factor that has enhanced security challenges in Nigeria is the country's porous frontiers, where individual movements are largely untracked. The porosity of Nigeria's borders has serious security implications for the country. Given the porous borders, as well as the weak security institutions, which are often underfunded, have poorly trained personnel, and are corrupt, it is difficult for them to effectively address security challenges. Weapons come easily into Nigeria from other countries; small Arms and Light Weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enabled militant and criminal groups to have easy access to arms. Nigeria is estimated to host over 70 percent of about 8 million illegal weapons in West Africa. Also, the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for an unwarranted influx of migrants from neighboring countries such as the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin. These migrants, who are mostly young men,

**Citation:** Ebiefie, Eyo O. & Archibong, Emmanuel I. "A Critical Dialectics on Sustainable Economic Development in Mitigating Nigeria's Security Challenges". *Journal of People and Worldviews (JPW)*, 2026: pp273-290.

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are some of the perpetrators of crime in the country (Akwaru *et al.*, 2014).

**Climate Change and Resource Competition:** Climate change and competition for resource control, such as land and water, contribute to security challenges in Nigeria. For instance, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the presence of oil and environmental degradation are seen as major drivers of security challenges, leading to militancy with negative impacts on lives and properties in the region, and the same is applicable between herders and farmers in other regions of the nation (Olusakin *et al.*, 2023).

**Rural and Urban Migration:** The migration of jobless youths from rural areas to urban centers is also one of the causes of security issues in Nigeria. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with very high rural and urban migration of young people seeking greener pastures. Most urban areas in Nigeria have grown beyond their environmental carrying capacities and existing infrastructure, and this has resulted in increased poor quality of living conditions in urban areas in Nigeria. Out of frustration, these youths are drawn into criminal activities as a means of survival. The sooner the government at all levels wakes up, the better for Nigeria, before things fall apart (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). These factors are interconnected and often exacerbate each other, making it challenging to address Nigeria's security challenges. Until we address the foundational drivers of these security challenges, sustainable economic development will always be a cog in the wheel of progress in Nigeria. Judging from the above, the

gross display of injustices in Nigeria and lack of ethical respect and understanding will always be a cog in the wheel of progress, sustainable economic development, and a security-free society until the government wakes up to its responsibilities (Ikenga *et al.*, 2022).

### Evaluation

In essence, sustainable development is not just a goal but a necessary condition for security, just as security is a prerequisite for development. However, the literature on sustainable economic development as a means of mitigating Nigeria's security challenges remains scanty.

**Economic Security:** This refers to security that requires an assured basic income for individuals, which manifests as the provision of productive employment opportunities and adequate remuneration. Unemployment, economic hopelessness, and chronic poverty are threats to economic security, and these factors hinder sustainable economic development of any nation. Governments at all levels must be involved in creating economic opportunities via the establishment of industries and human empowerment programs for their citizens (Adebakin, 2012).

**Food Security:** This is of paramount necessity for the continuation of not only human existence but also the peace and security of the country. Food security in Nigeria is threatened by several challenges, including oil spills and pollution, which have devastated the Niger Delta region, affecting local ecosystems and livelihoods. For

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example, yam tubers, staple crops, and cassava in the Niger Delta region have been contaminated or damaged by oil spills. The region's agricultural productivity has decreased significantly, leading to scarcity and increased food prices. This makes it difficult for locals and poor citizens to afford nutritious food, resulting in health hazards that often lead to the untimely death of citizens (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). Oil pollution has affected artisanal fishermen more significantly than fish farmers. Fish populations, such as catfish and tilapia, have been severely depleted. Some food crops and fish species have disappeared or become extinct due to oil-related activities and gas flaring in the region. Many farmers in other regions of Nigeria lack access to modern farming tools, fertilizers, and herbicides, further exacerbating the decline in agricultural productivity. The study reveals that all of these lead to socio-economic challenges in Nigeria (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025c).

The high rate of poverty and unemployment in Nigeria contributes to food security challenges, as many households cannot afford nutritious food in three square meals. Inadequate storage facilities can lead to premature harvesting and post-harvest losses. Farmers often lack access to government programs and facilities designed to boost agriculture. In reality, staple crops such as cassava, yam, plantains, and cocoyam have been affected by oil spills, leading to contamination and reduced harvests, impacting the quality and safety of food consumed by local communities. The absence of proper storage facilities exacerbates food scarcity issues, forcing farmers to

harvest crops prematurely, further contributing to the challenge of food security in Nigeria (Oluwaleye, 2013).

**Health Security:** This is vital to human security, involving protection from threats to physical and mental well-being. In Nigeria, health security is severely undermined by environmental hazards, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, economic hardships, and security challenges. This has led to high morbidity and mortality rates, creating a public health crisis in a nation rich in natural resources but poor in basic social services, through the following health factors (Ezeajughu, 2021): Oil spills and gas flaring pollute water, soil, and air, leading to serious health issues such as respiratory problems, skin diseases, cancers, and birth defects. This security requires an assurance of minimum protection from all forms of diseases and unhealthy lifestyles that cut short human lives. Threats to health security are the absence of clean water, a dirty environment, and poor hygiene and health education. To address these health security challenges in Nigeria, effective environmental clean-up, healthcare investment, health workforce support, disease surveillance response, water and sanitation projects, community health education, and conflict-sensitive health programming are highly needed in ways that address local grievances and promote peace in Nigeria.

**Environmental Security:** Since the beginning of oil explorations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, multinational oil companies have wreaked havoc on neighboring communities and their environment.

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Apart from the physical destruction of plants around the flaring areas, thick soot is deposited in the atmosphere. Whenever it rains, the soot is washed off, and the black-ink-like water runs down the roofs with chemicals that adversely affect the fertility of the soil. Many of the operational practices and facilities used by multinational oil companies are outdated, in poor condition, and are illegal in other parts of the world. Multinational high-pressure oil pipelines are constructed above the ground through villages and crisscross over pieces of land that were once used for agricultural purposes, thereby rendering them economically useless. Many oil pipelines pass within meters of people's homes (Douglas, 2018:34-36).

The World Wide Fund for Nature has calculated that Shell's gas-flaring activities in Nigeria are a major contributor to global warming. Because of nearly four decades of oil extraction, the Niger Delta coastal rainforest and mangroves are the most endangered river deltas in the world, according to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Umoh, 2023). This requires planned protection of people from the short and long-term ravages of nature, spill-over negative effects of environmental degradation, and abuse of the ecosystem and natural environment in the forms of desertification, gas flaring and emission, pollution of fresh water, and careless use of industrial chemicals.

**Personal and Community Security:** Nigeria faces significant ethnic and inter-community security challenges. Disputes over land, resources, and political power have led to violent

clashes between communities, resulting in displacement, injury, and loss of life. Ethnic and inter-community disputes have also played a role in exacerbating security challenges in the country. A good example is the ongoing security challenges between Nkari in Akwa Ibom State and Ariam in Abia State caused by community boundaries. This conflict has claimed many lives and some valuable property. Additionally, historical grievances, competition for resources, and perceived marginalization have fueled tensions between ethnic groups such as the Ijaw, Ogoni, and Itsekiri. Some ethnic groups have turned to militancy and violence to assert their demands, leading to attacks on oil infrastructure, government forces, and other communities. Unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunities have contributed to youth restiveness, making them more susceptible to recruitment by militant groups, resulting in displacement, human rights abuse, and loss of life (Ebiefie *et al.*, 2025a). Mutual distrust has eroded trust between communities, making it challenging to build lasting peace. The study reveals that, in addressing these challenges, potential solutions such as encouraging dialogue and mediation between ethnic groups and communities could help resolve disputes and build trust.

**Political Security:** This type of security is concerned with the protection of fundamental human rights of electorates as well as freedom from systematic torture, ill treatment, and coercion. The seven dimensions of national security can summarily be described as "...protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social

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conflict, political repression, and environmental hazards" (UNDP, 2023). National security, as defined above, is a sacrosanct and non-negotiable phenomenon in human society. This perhaps informed why every President or Governor in Nigeria, at the time of assuming the position of authority, is requested to take an oath to provide security for the lives and properties of citizens (Otto and Ukpere, 2012). Specifically, Section 14(b) of the Constitution (1999) states that: "...It is hereby accordingly declared that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government."

To discharge this function creditably, the Chief Executive, as President, Governor, and Local Government Boss, has been allotted security votes and access to security authorities (Osunyikanmi *et al.*, 2019). Addressing security challenges requires economic development, but economic development is hindered by security challenges. Short-term security measures might provide temporary relief but often neglect underlying economic issues. Sustainable economic development requires addressing root causes like poverty, inequality, and governance issues as a solution to Nigeria's security challenges.

### **Implications of Security Challenges on Sustainable Economic Development**

The implications of Nigeria's security challenges on Sustainable Economic Development cannot be overemphasized. They include:

#### **Poverty**

The country's condition has had a significant impact on efforts to

enhance citizens' quality of life because poverty, unemployment, and malnutrition still exist in every corner of the nation. A country is classified as developed when it can provide a quality of life for its citizenry. Nigeria has been battling development problems despite abundant material and natural resources in its possession (Archibong and Nsikak, 2023). With the global economic meltdown occasioned by climate change and the herders' and bandits' disruption of the agriculture sector in Nigeria, one can have a clearer picture of the ripple effect of security challenges on the economy. Also, Adekoya (2021) notes that because of the instability caused by security attacks and violent confrontations between militants, herders, and farmers, food prices have increased. Many people who depended on farming are now jobless because of the menace of the bandits, militants, and herdsmen, thereby creating room for poverty.

Moreover, many farmers, especially from the Northern region, are driven away from their lands and settled in internally displaced person (IDP) camps across various areas affected by the farmer-herder conflicts. In collaboration with the above thought, work reveals that because of security issues, farmers do not farm for the whole year because of the fear of being attacked and killed in the face of ravaging security challenges in their community. Due to these security attack incidents, farmers would experience low yields and thus, low revenue.

## Economic Development

The cost of conducting business in the nation and the disposable incomes of many Nigerians are suffering because of the government's incapacity to provide effective and efficient security for life and property. The economy of Nigeria is being impacted by the actions of Boko Haram, bandits, kidnappers, and other armed organizations. Together, these social ills pose a threat to the safety of the lives and property of both Nigerians and foreigners who reside in or attempt to do business in the nation (Ezeajughu, 2021). There has also been a widespread disruption of economic activities with negative effects on production. Many businesses have been destroyed as a result of security attacks. The high-risk business climate brought on by security challenges and the appalling state of essential infrastructure is one of the main issues preventing foreign investment in the economy (Adekoya, 2021).

The extent of the nation's instability, which makes it unsafe for business owners and farmers to do their business, has discouraged investors from the economy. The investment inflow continues to be hampered by security issues and governance challenges. No one can invest where they cannot recoup the intensive capital invested in the business. These businesses could have provided many job opportunities for the teeming populace of the country and also generated revenue for the government (Okolie *et al.*, 2019). The hardest hit by security attacks is agriculture, which is the sustenance of life. The farmers are prevented in

some regions from going to their farmlands because of farmer-herder crises as well as communal clashes. The result is the unavailability of raw materials to the manufacturers, who now depend entirely on imports, thereby increasing the demand for scarce foreign exchange for production. Those who made efforts cannot get to the manufacturers or distribute their products in many regions of the country.

Yusuf in Adekoya (2021) avers that even when the food is produced by the farmers, the security situation prevents farmers from accessing markets, which results in the inability to distribute goods across the country. Analyzing the effect of security attacks on the economy of Nigeria, Onime (2018) notes that security issues affect economic growth by drying out investment, increasing unemployment, and reducing government revenue, among others. Security challenges can stall economic activities and disrupt governmental programs in the country. It will dissuade investors from investing in the nation, thereby preventing the creation of job opportunities that would have offered the population jobs (Momoh *et al.*, 2020).

Momoh *et al.* (2020) outline 10 economic consequences of growing security challenges in Nigeria. These include foreign direct investment, gross fixed capital formation, public debt, inflation rate, insecurity, government security spending, per capita income, government expenditure on health, government expenditure on education, and government internal revenue

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(Archibong, 2021). With security challenges affecting various economic sectors in Nigeria, any effort by the government administration to grow the economy would most likely fail if security challenges are not dealt with.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

The level of development of a country is affected by many factors, one of which is security challenges. When security attacks are exacerbated in a society, it will affect education, businesses, and the economy, which will in turn affect the entire development of the society. Infrastructure is the basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society. Supporting this assertion, Ebiefie et al. (2025c) posit that: "The educational provisions within any given country represent one of the main determinants of the composition and growth of that country's output and exports and constitute an important ingredient in a system's capacity to borrow foreign technology effectively." It is an underlying base or foundation, especially for any society to thrive.

With the ravaging security challenges currently affecting infrastructural development and consuming much money channeled to the fight against security attacks in Nigeria, the nation's development will continue to decline. As a result of security issues, the lack of fundamental development infrastructures such as electricity has hindered the industrialization of the country and the creation of employment possibilities, which has stymied other efforts to propel the

economic revival of the world's seventh-most populated country (Pepple, 2021). However, the available infrastructures provided by the government are targeted by bandits, militia groups, and others. Since the beginning of security challenges in Nigeria, many government facilities such as pipelines, security facilities, and recently rails have been bombed by bandits. Painfully, as it is, the money that could have been used to provide infrastructure in the country has to be expended on security, yet the problem remains the same.

### **Conclusion**

Security challenges are unhealthy for any society and even worse when they affect key sectors, wasting many lives and properties. With the ravaging security attacks in Nigeria, no place or human being is safe from the threat of security challenges. Unemployment and poverty, among other factors, are seen as drivers of security challenges in Nigeria. Despite government policies and efforts to address security issues, challenges persist. The present security challenges in Nigeria are unhealthy for the nation, posing a significant threat to its existence. It is evident from the article's findings that unemployment and poverty are used to justify perpetrators' actions, as they are made to believe they are fighting for their rights, and until this is addressed by the authorities, the situation will continue. Therefore, economic development is seen as a solution to mitigate security attacks in Nigeria. As economic development provides employment and

empowerment opportunities to young people and social control to maintain stability in society, it will enhance friendliness among people living in the same locality. It will bridge the ethnic and cultural diversity gap, cementing it with love, relationships, and mutual understanding, which will help bring all stakeholders together. Once the issues of unemployment and poverty are handled through sustainable economic development, all stakeholders will be able to unite and fight security challenges in Nigeria.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations to tackle Nigeria's security challenges are hereby proposed:

1. The security issue should be prioritized by the Nigerian government through employing an effective intelligence-driven mechanism to help tackle security challenges in Nigeria. Terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, and other forms of crime in Nigeria are intelligence-driven. The government should sincerely invest in security infrastructure to confront the firepower of these bandits and kidnappers.
2. Religious institutions should be tasked to lay more emphasis on the teachings of religious values and principles such as love, justice, peace and forgiveness in their communities. They should also influence these values within their communities by living them and encouraging their adherents to exhibit the same in their communities.

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**Citation:** Ebiefie, Eyo O. & Archibong, Emmanuel I. "A Critical Dialectics on Sustainable Economic Development in Mitigating Nigeria's Security Challenges". *Journal of People and Worldviews (JPW)*, 2026: pp273-290.

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